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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1351
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 001181

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E.O. 12958:N/A

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO MINISTRY PREVIEWS BELGRADE'S TROIKA APPROACH

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Dusan Prorokovic, State Secretary of Serbia's Kosovo Ministry, told us that Kosovo Minister Slobodan Samardzic and Foreign Minister Jeremic will participate in August 30 discussions with the Kosovo Troika in Vienna and that the GOS will announce the names of the others in the delegation once it better understands the format for the talks. Raising the matter of public statements on NATO and Kosovo security that various Serbian government officials have made recently, Prorokovic downplayed their importance and professed surprise that they had provoked concern in Kosovo or foreign capitals. Prorokovic said that Belgrade will bring "fresh ideas" to Vienna, likely outlining a Serbian definition of autonomy for Kosovo within Serbia. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On August 21, Dusan Prorokovic, State Secretary for Serbia's Ministry for Kosovo, told poloff that the GOS awaits the Kosovo Troika's (KT) response to its inquiries about the format of the upcoming talks in Vienna. Prorokovic said that the GOS has formally asked about the format on two occasions, once during their August 10 meeting in Belgrade and, later, directly of Ischinger's office in Berlin. Prorokovic said that the GOS will make decisions about the composition of the delegation based on the format, but said that KosMin Samardzic and FM Jeremic will participate, in any event.

New Format

¶3. (SBU) Prorokovic said that the Troika's August 10 visit to Serbia made a "good first impression" on the GOS and said that this new round of negotiations provides a "new opportunity for Serbia," since Ahtisaari "ignored" Belgrade during the UNOSEK process. He said it was a "good sign" that the Troika "seemed ready to hear new ideas." Prorokovic said that the GOS turned down a request from EU Envoy Wolfgang Ischinger for a solo visit to Belgrade, subsequent to the August 10 meeting, judging it appropriate only to meet with the Troika, but might not object to Ischinger visiting in a non-Troika capacity. Prorokovic reiterated that the GOS views the Troika's December 10 report to the UN Secretary General as "only an interim report" and not the conclusion of negotiations.

Autonomy

¶4. (SBU) Asked about possible new ideas from Belgrade, Prorokovic said that the GOS has some but does not want to weaken its negotiating position by publicizing them prior to the meeting. He suggested, nonetheless, that the GOS is considering new definitions of Kosovo autonomy including "independent relations" with international financial institutions (IFIs). He cited as possible models Taiwan's relations with the World Bank and IMF and Bosnia's Brcko district regarding "issues of citizenship, relationships with IFIs, and a territory without customs." (Note: A local UN

representative told us Prorokovic mentioned the same issues to him in a different meeting, and he pressed Prorokovic further, asking if Serbia would accept Kosovo having its own telephone, airport (ICAO) or banking (SWIFT) codes. Prorokovic answered "no" to each. End note.) Prorokovic hinted that the GOS has also looked at the Faroe Islands' relationship to Denmark and the Basques' to Spain, and may raise these examples at the Troika negotiations.

Elections

15. (SBU) Prorokovic said that the GOS is "concerned" that upcoming elections in Kosovo will "distract" Pristina during the negotiations and the sides "will lose months." Responding to questions about a similar impact of Belgrade's presidential and local elections, which might also take place during the negotiations, Prorokovic said that he did not expect parliament to pass the laws necessary to hold elections before December.

Defending against NATO?

16. (SBU) Prorokovic said that the GOS will likely raise in Vienna their objections to efforts to establish a "NATO state" in Kosovo. Reiterating complaints that he and senior DSS and GOS officials made in the preceding days, he maintained that NATO, empowered by Annex XI of the Ahtisaari plan, is authorized "unregulated military control" of Kosovo, wants to set up a "state ...without civilian oversight" Prorokovic said there are "irregularities" already regarding NATO's role in Kosovo and implied that there are "unregistered flights" into and out of Kosovo and "serious questions about [the legal status of] Camp Bondsteel." He brushed aside the fact that NATO is comprised of democratic states with civilian oversight of their militaries.

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...Against Security Threats

17. (SBU) Prorokovic brought up Prime Minister advisor Aleksandar Simic's recent controversial suggestion that Serbia redeploy security forces to Kosovo. The government aired this idea, he said, in response to KFOR Commander General Kather's warning, as carried widely by the press on August 14, that the security situation Kosovo "will deteriorate" if 120 days of talks do not lead to a status decision. Prorokovic said that the GOS "had to respond" and assert that the GOS would be ready to step in if KFOR could not fulfill its mandate to ensure security in Kosovo. He said that, while this was the first time that the current Government had suggested such measures, representatives of previous Governments of Serbia (e.g. Deputy PM Covic) had requested authorization to return troops to Kosovo. Prorokovic suggested Banjska Monastery as an appropriate area to "test" deployment, despite the fact that he could not identify security concerns for Kosovo Serbs there. He hinted that Gracanica was "at risk," but that admitted a deployment there would be "impossible." In the end, he retreated to UNSCR 1244 "which allows us to do this."

Same Old "Fresh Ideas"

18. (SBU) Comment: Belgrade views these new talks as an inherent victory and the incarnation of the Ahtisaari Plan's failure. Prorokovic, Samardzic's mouthpiece and operations man, indicates that Belgrade's "fresh ideas" will simply address how to define Kosovo's autonomy within Serbia. His lack of specifics about the Serbia's team composition and any concrete, realistic proposals suggests that the GOS negotiating strategy remains a work in progress. Belgrade's anti-NATO vituperation and provocative proposals to send in the security forces, however, set the tone for less than constructive engagement. End comment.

